

# Agroecology and social care: Learning to speak other peoples' languages through Farming with Care

Agroecology Conference for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Tuesday 29 January 14.45 - 16.15

[Iziko South African Museum](#)

25 Queen Victoria St, Gardens, Cape Town, 8001, South Africa

The session offered a creative space as we practiced a different way to engage, with ourselves and with others.

A story to create a context and a dream to make come true offered a frame for investigating how to help and ideate a solution that brings together both personal and collective knowledge and wisdom, in respect.

The participants practiced active listening and mindfulness, they dedicated some time to self-reflection, practiced drawing with the non-dominant hand and some free writing. All of this catered for a non-judgemental environment that allowed safe spaces of expression, stimulated lateral thinking and engaging a in an unconventional manner.

The participants had the opportunity to experience different situations using the overarching structure:

1. What is your language?
2. Learning to LISTEN to each other's language
3. Learning to SPEAK each other's languages
4. What is the value of listening AND speaking each other's languages

The solutions that stemmed from the workshop participants that weaved personal ideas into a collective were precious. However, the most interesting part of the feedback referred to the experience - and appreciating the process more than the product was also the aim of this session.

Amongst the highlights, the participants named co-creation and integration of ideas. There was however much more – as reading on will testify.

At the onset of the session, after providing some context and a few guidelines, the participants were asked to introduce themselves and name a value that could make for a precious offering to the session.

These are listed below:

## Values

(That will be useful to the session)

- Collaboration
- Curiosity
- Diversity of mind
- Gratitude
- Honesty
- Imagination
- Inspiration
- Being inquisitive

- Knowledge
- Learning
- Listening
- Reflection
- Respect
- Presence
- Trust

While closing the session the participants offered some feedback through the following:

### Some of the collective ideas that stemmed from solutioning

- We need to network to market
- Make use of technology – e.g. a WhatsApp group
- Watch her land: how does it evolve through the seasons?
- Find a place to sow seeds
- Have a welcome braai (barbeque) to network with the community
- Breakdown fences between properties to make a food garden
- Discuss local knowledge of the land
- Set up a school program for the kids
- Organise events around the food from the garden
- Ideate community projects
- Set up a facility for seed storage
- Capitalise on the knowledge from the elders and connect with the youth, getting them involved in agriculture

### The value of the methodology and the methods used

- It was a clever process (the exercise plus the story) - these stimulated ideation, prompted liaising in a community and co-creating whilst weaving points of view/values into the solution
- The workshop offered a frame to surrender showing the value of being constructive and open
- Incorporate the views and dreams of the wider community
- The beauty of creation ideated as a collective
- Different ideas - from different people - coming from different places (mental and geographical).
- A process that makes us appreciate the value of "Give and take"
- From individual to pair, to group: we have diversity yet similarity in ideas and solutions
- This workshop shows the Interconnection with the community offering a microcosm of a real community
- Building bridges and bringing down walls, opening up to each other
- How much we strive for perfection, while it is OK not to be perfect
- Looking for our place and our voice in the community
- Helps appreciating the importance of building upon soft skills
- We are all different but we can build one vision if we connect and work together with an open mind and an open heart
- The scarcity of resources can offer some positive Creativity can be stimulated in a constrained world; time
- The workshop opened the intuitive and subconscious parts of ourselves



Figure 1 Introspection through free writing



Figure 2 Sharing and co-creating a solution



Figure 3 The session participants

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